



PATHWAYS

A Publication for the Alumnae, Parents and Friends of St. Catharine Academy

Winter 2019

THE WORK CONTINUES TO ADVANCE



Two major projects side by side, and the East Wall (Laconia Avenue) finished first. Before the deep freeze of a New York winter set in, the scaffolding came down revealing a building that looks, well, the same as before. That is, except for the brick that had been replaced to match the original façade, and the extensive masonry work which makes for a watertight school. New light

sensitive lighting was installed along the roof to increase safety and security. The repairs were completed working around a fully occupied school.

The new construction moves forward more slowly. Renovation of existing space often reveals surprises and unforeseen challenges. That is true for SCA. We are looking forward to a noisy but active Spring. ❖

Save
the
Date

April 7, 2019 Multi Year Reunion for classes ending in 4 and 9



Be a Lamp, a Lifeboat, a Ladder

Sr. Patricia Wolf, RSM '62

It seems like ages ago when my idea for this letter began to form. It was at an SCA Mass on December 12, 2018. The liturgical season was Advent, and the day coincided with two important feasts: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas and the Foundation Day of the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland in 1831. We've all sat through exceedingly boring homilies, but the homily delivered this day by Fr. Jack Rathschmidt, OFM Cap., was memorable. He organized his message around a quote from Rumi, the 13th Century Persian poet: Be a lamp, a lifeboat, a ladder. The image and message have been with me ever since.

While the Sisters of Mercy were founded in Ireland in 1831, just 12 years later on December 20, 1843 the Sisters of Mercy arrived in the United States. This year honors the 175th anniversary of our arrival in Pittsburgh. (p. 5) The annals of the Sisters of Mercy tell us that it quickly became apparent to this young Mercy community that education was the doorway to dignity. Thus began the founding of schools, one by one across the United States, lifting children from poverty and lighting a path of hope. St. Catharine Academy was founded some forty-six years later in 1889, but it is from the

pioneering vision of these early Mercy sisters that we claim our school's Mercy identity.

Mother Frances Warde led that first Mercy contingent to the United States. She knew our Sisters of Mercy founder, Catherine McAuley, personally. In 1879 she wrote of Catherine:

**"She was a woman of God
and God made her a
woman of vision.**

**She showed me what it meant
to be a Sister of Mercy**

**To see the world and its people
in terms of God's love.**

**To love everyone who needed
love, and to care for everyone
who needed care.**

**Now her vision is driving
me on—it is a glorious thing
to be a Sister of Mercy."**

After 55 years I too can say it is a glorious thing to be a Sister of Mercy. However, Sr. Ivette Diaz, RSM '83, (p. 6) is tasked

with a particular responsibility within the Sisters of Mercy, Vocation Minister. Not an easy ministry, particularly when the prevailing narrative is that religious life is dying. Yet, Ivette is a lamp for discerning women, shining light on our life and immersed in cultures and communities of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.

As I reviewed the text for this *Pathways* edition I was struck by how different stories beacon a return to SCA roots. Certainly Sr. Ivette's does. For Valerie Irick Rainford '82, (p. 3) SCA was her ladder. It is precisely her lasting experience of SCA, "that there is life beyond the projects", that drives her on to make a difference for today's Catharine. Valerie established the Valerie Irick Rainford Scholarship and initiated a qualifying writing competition for juniors and seniors to offset tuition. The process of writing about an experience of resilience and courage, in itself, served as lamp, lifeboat and ladder for participants.

Finally, this *Pathways* brings news of an impending transition. Kathleen McCarrick Weiden '75 will complete her term as Chair of the Board of Trustees in June, succeeded by Kathleen Muskopf, Vice Chair (p. 4). The Director of Principal Gifts at Manhattan College, Kathy Muskopf first engaged with SCA during our 125th anniversary celebrations and has been with us ever since. In SCA she sees hope, not just for Catholic education, but because she believes an SCA education can and will produce the next generation of leaders.

May all of us be lamp, lifeboat, and ladder wherever we may be. ❖

St. Catharine Academy

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Valerie Irick Rainford '82 Scholarship Recipients

Author Valerie Irick Rainford '82 had a novel idea to create a writing competition at St. Catharine Academy for juniors and seniors to offset tuition. She envisioned the competition would be based on her memoir, global best-selling book, *Until the Brighter Tomorrow, One Woman's Courageous Climb from the Projects to the Podium*. Students were asked to submit a minimum 1,000 word essay describing their own experiences of resilience and courage. "I have a story to tell," Valerie said, "and I want to help others tell their story. At SCA I saw that there was life beyond the projects. I want to inspire people to get beyond their circumstances."

Her vision became reality last fall when, at a school assembly, she announced the winners of the Valerie Irick Rainford Scholarships: First Place: Junior Priscilla Assifuah was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship and tied for 2nd place: Seniors Natalie Cantatore and Alene Ortiz were awarded \$500 scholarships.

"Ms. Rainford's book inspired me to become a stronger person and it also inspired me by knowing anything and everything is possible," Priscilla said. "I learned that I have come very far in life even with all the difficulties I faced when it comes to my condition. I learned never to back down and keep my head up high. I have learned to love myself and keep working hard to do better."

Natalie Cantatore said she participated because she wanted her story to be told. "Writing this was an escape for me and I hoped that if other people saw my struggles and how I am overcoming them it can inspire others to do the same." She added that Ms. Rainford's book was an inspiration to her. "Her book taught me that you can live your life in two ways: being eaten alive by your struggles, or overcoming your problems to become a stronger person. Choosing either one of these can impact your life in many different ways and she taught me to choose the correct path to follow. I learned that I am much stronger than what I think and that there will always be people in my life to help me and be there for me when my life feels desaturated and empty."

Alene said she participated because Valerie's story felt similar to her own. "I felt that if someone heard my story then maybe I could make a difference in some way. Ms. Rainford's book inspired me to want to take what I have gone through and let it push me to be great. To let it remind me that no matter what, I can do anything, be anything and be anyone I want to be." She added, "I learned that I mean something to a lot of



L to R: Priscilla Assifuah '20, Valerie Irick Rainford '82, Alene Ortiz '19 and Natalie Cantatore '19

people and that there is a beauty in every story, even in mine."

Valerie's story does point to the beauty that can come along with struggle. She grew up in the projects in the Bronx and had her share of heartache, losing her mother and brother at a young age.

After graduating from SCA in 1982, Rainford went on to earn a B.A. in economics from Fordham University. She is a Financial Services Executive, and for over ten years, Valerie has served in a number of executive capacities within JPMorgan Chase. She currently is the Head of JP Morgan Chase's industry-leading Diversity Advancement Strategies & Advancing Black Leaders Strategy. She is also a member of the Executive Leadership Council, the leading global organization of senior African-Americans in business, focused on building a pipeline of future black executives. She is the creator of a global girl's initiative, I Will Reign, and is co-founder and Board Chair of Black Women of Influence, a networking and development organization created in memory of her mother.

As an author, she was a finalist of the Benjamin Franklin Book Award "Best New Voice Nonfiction" Independent Book Publisher Association, and the book is also the namesake for Girl Scouts badge, "Until the Brighter Tomorrow", created in Valerie's honor. To learn more about Valerie's programs, please visit www.valerierainford.com.

Valerie summed up the scholarships saying, "SCA was such an important part of my growth. It warms my heart to know that I can pay forward the gifts of faith, confidence and perseverance that I learned as a student of SCA....Everybody will get something out of it as they explore the person each of them can be." ❖

Kathleen Muskopf to Become Chair of the Board of Trustees in June

By Patrice E. Athanasidy

Kathleen Muskopf, a member of the Board since 2016 and now Vice Chair, will succeed to chair in June 2019. She follows Kathleen McCarrick Weiden '75, who has served as chair since 2011 and who will continue as a member of the Board. (You can read more about Kathleen's exemplary service as chair in the next issue of *Pathways*.)

Muskopf, Director of Principal Gifts at Manhattan College, has been a nonprofit fundraising professional for much of her career. She became acquainted with St. Catharine Academy through its 125th anniversary capital campaign.



Kathleen McCarrick Weiden, PhD '75

"I believe in single sex Catholic education," she said. "I've seen many young women thrive in this environment, including my own daughter."

As chair, she plans to help bring St. Catharine's fundraising program to the next level. Pointing to Weiden's strengths in finance and business, Muskopf said Weiden has left her a strong foundation to build upon. "Working with Sr. Pat Wolf, RSM, and Sr. Ann Welch, RSM, Kathy's leadership enabled SCA to launch and complete a successful \$2.5 million capital campaign."

She added, "Kathy Weiden is an extraordinary chair who served SCA at a critical time. A dedicated alumna, she has her finger on the pulse of the mission and the culture of SCA."

Muskopf has come to appreciate what a vibrant community SCA is. One of her goals is to help engage even more alumnae within this community. She added, "I look forward to working with my dedicated board peers and SCA's administration making SCA the best it can be."

"One of SCA's great strengths is that the Board of Trustees and the Administration approach the work as a joint effort," said Sr. Patricia Wolf, President. "I am grateful for the guidance and leadership of Kathy Weiden and look forward to working

with Kathy Muskopf as we take on a new set of opportunities and challenges."

Muskopf has served at Manhattan College for more than a decade. She began there as director of the annual fund in 2007 and was promoted to Director of Principal Gifts in 2010.

A resident of Bayside, N.Y., Muskopf is a graduate of St. John's University. She earned her master's degree from New York Institute of Technology. When she first joined the Board she said, "I really respect the leadership of St. Catharine's. I am impressed with how motivated the students are. I am happy to help those that might need support to reach their potential." She has been serving on the Major Gifts Committee.

"I am proud to see the great academic and professional accomplishments of our SCA graduates," Muskopf concluded. "It gives me hope for our future knowing these young women will be among our next leaders." ❖



Kathleen Muskopf

SCA to Celebrate Partners in Education

Save the Date

St. Catharine Academy will celebrate its legacy of education on **March 28** with a Partners in Education reception. We would like to invite all alumnae who have served within the field of education from pre-school through higher education. Teachers, administrators and staff, you are all partners in educating the generations of students near and far. Please be sure we have your most up to date information so that we can include you in this event. Send your name, class year, school affiliation and email address to: ccolletti@scachs.org.

175 Years in the United States

Long before the Sisters of Mercy opened St. Catharine Academy in New York, they began their ministry in the United States. Founded in Ireland by Venerable Catherine McAuley in 1831, the Sisters of Mercy saw a need for their service in the young United States of America. In 1843, a small group of seven sisters led by Mother Frances Warde, arrived in Pittsburgh, PA, just before Christmas.

Their mission was to serve those most in need: the uneducated, the poor and the sick, especially women and children. Accompanying Sister Frances were Sister Josephine Cullen, Sister Elizabeth Strange, Sister Aloysia Strange, Sister Philomena Reid, Sister Agatha (Margaret) O'Brien and Sister Veronica McDarby. Together, this small group, which became known as the "Seven Sisters" opened schools and established the first Mercy-sponsored hospital in the world in Pittsburgh, Mercy Hospital. The hospital is still serving the Pittsburgh and surrounding community today.

As the Sisters of Mercy numbers grew so did their ministries, always maintaining their mission of caring for those most in need. In a little over ten years, the Sisters of Mercy had made it all the way across America. They took up residence in New York City, Chicago, Little Rock, and San Francisco. In the next ten years, they were serving in many more cities including Philadelphia, Providence, St. Louis and New Orleans. Today, the Sisters of Mercy continue to serve around the country and around the world. Their ministries include hospitals, schools, and universities, pastoral and social services and advocacy.

A main focus of their mission at this time is caring for migrants. A number of Sisters are working along the U.S.-Mexico border. They are bringing mercy to those most in need on a day-to-day basis by being present and working for justice for those without a voice.

Our piece of Mercy history

In the fall of 1889, the Sisters of Mercy opened the school that was the forerunner of the St. Catharine Academy we know today. The school opened at the request of Rev. Edward Slattery, who had asked for a small group

of Sisters of Mercy to assist him in developing a newly established parish. At his suggestion, they used part of their residence to start a school. The first academy opened in November of that year and was dedicated to St. Catharine of Genoa. Ten years later, increased enrollment required a move to a larger building, which also was able to accommodate boarders. So began a pattern of growth and movement that was to become part of SCA's ongoing reality. In fact, the legacy on Williamsbridge Road is its longest stay in one location and now that building is undergoing growth.

St. Catharine Academy is part of the Mercy Education System of the Americas (MESA) which is comprised of 56 schools in the US, Guam, the Philippines, Honduras, Belize, Jamaica and Argentina.



Join in the Mercy Celebration

The Sisters of Mercy are inviting all in the circle of Mercy to join in the celebration of the 175th anniversary by sharing in the works of Mercy in their own way. Learn more about the anniversary celebrations at www.sister-sofmercy.org/about-us/our-175th-anniversary.

This past holiday season, the St. Catharine Academy community joined together to share good works by collecting cans of food for the Mercy Center. With more than 5,000 cans delivered, SCA contributed 29X the 175 challenge!

Watch the E-Monthly newsletter and social media for more ways SCA will join in the celebration. ❖

Sr. Ivette Diaz, RSM, '83 lives out the Mercy Mission

By Patrice E. Athanasidy

As vocation minister for the Sisters of Mercy, Sr. Ivette Diaz, RSM, '83 works with women who are deciding on their vocation. She says her own journey came a little at a time, it was no one moment.

Discerning her own vocation

She began her high school career at another Catholic high school in the Bronx, but when surgeries complicated the first year of her education, the school and her mother were not able to come to an agreement about Sr. Ivette's education. Her mother wanted her to repeat the first year since she had missed so much, the school would not agree.

That very day, Mrs. Diaz walked straight to St. Catharine Academy. "They were very welcoming," Sr. Ivette said. "They worked with me and let me start there as a freshman." Looking back, Sr. Ivette believes this was the beginning of her vocational journey. "I feel it was God that sent my mother to SCA and I ended up becoming a Sister of Mercy."

Sr. Ivette did not decide to become a Sister of Mercy until after graduating from college. While in high school and in college, she was seeking ways to deepen her prayer life. She talked with Grace Regan, her seventh grade teacher at St. Frances de Chantal and her English teacher at St. Catharine's. "Ms. Regan was quite supportive throughout my four years at St. Catharine's and she was the one that encouraged me to contact the Sisters of Mercy about exploring my desire to grow in my relationship with God."

Sister Patricia Vetrano, RSM, now president of the Congregation, became a mentor. "I went to Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh and Sr. Pat came to campus. She kept in touch with me." The year after college graduation, Sr. Ivette entered the community. "It was a blessing for me to come in touch with Ms. Grace Regan again because she was so supportive," she reflected.

Sr. Ivette says it was many little things that drew her to the Sisters of Mercy. So many teachers at St. Catharine's were supportive as she continued to have surgeries on her knee throughout high school. She pointed to Sr. Helen Scannell, RSM, who taught Spanish at the time, as especially supportive. Sr. Ivette also credited Sr. Gwen Cote, RSM, as being a "very big influence."



Sr. Ivette Diaz, RSM, (far right) is joined by Brother Jose Julian Matos-Auffant, SM, Marianist Brother, and Sr. Andrea Falconer, OP, Dominican Sister of Our Lady of Fatima at V Encuentro in California.

She recalled coming back to school after one of her surgeries on crutches again. "A little nun in the library handed me a prayer card of St. Roch. [The sister] said he would be a good saint for me because of my crutches," she said. St. Roch is the patron saint of invalids. "I never heard of the saint. It was very touching."

During her time at St. Catharine's, Sr. Ivette participated in Teens Encounter Christ and was the manager for the JV Basketball Team. In senior year, her knee was stronger and she was able to play softball. "That they gave me a chance," she said, was very special.

Living the Mercy Mission

A native of the Bronx, Sr. Ivette has served as a Sister of Mercy from a soup kitchen in Belize to a home for juvenile delinquents in Audubon, Pa. She also served as the pastoral associate at Sacred Heart Church in Mount Vernon. "I did everything you could imagine," Sr. Ivette quipped.

Reflecting on her ministries, Sr. Ivette said everything she has done has been good for her and helped prepare her for her current ministry as vocation minister. She believes her Puerto Rican heritage also helps show how vibrant and diverse the Sisters of Mercy are by giving young women someone to relate to.

With a home base in Philadelphia, Sr. Ivette accompanies women who are discerning. She runs retreats and speaks at conferences, bringing special attention to involving young Hispanics/Latinos. (See picture of V Encuentro Conference.)

"It is about finding ways to get young women to get to know the Sisters of Mercy," she concluded.

To learn more about Sr. Ivette's own discernment and the Sisters of Mercy visit www.sistersofmercy.org/become-a-sister/videos-sisters-share-their-vocation-stories. ❖

1956 Sandra White McDonald has been married for 60 years to Pat and they have six children, twenty grandchildren and sixteen great grandchildren and love their retirement in Arizona.

1957 Jane McManus Bernstein writes, “Looking forward to our 55th in 2022. God willing, we’ll have a great turnout like in 2017! So many wonderful ladies and happy memories.”

Sylvia Segreti Walsh writes, “Salvatrice Russo-Alesi Scotto passed away on December 27, 2017. Sally graduated from SCA Class of 1957. We attended our 50th class reunion two years ago. She was a perfect example of what a Christian woman should be. Sally was kind and compassionate to all who were lucky enough to have known her. She was a devoted wife, mother, friend and sister. Though she is dearly missed, I thank God and SCA for knowing her. Please remember her and her family in your prayers.”

1958 Nancy Silvestro Tuccillo writes, “Except for my marriage and the birth of my four children, St. Catharine Academy was my happiest moment as well.”

1960 Arlene Clanny is enjoying retirement and traveling. Her latest trip was a river cruise from Milan to Venice.

1961 Kathleen Flynn McAvoy and her husband, Tom, have ten grandchildren (five boys and five girls). Their grandchildren live in North Dakota, Florida and Connecticut. Kathleen and Tom traveled to Avila, Spain in September with her sister, Maureen Flynn Koetl '60.

1962 Ann Sgrignoli Gerbeth writes, “The SCA class of '62 continues to enjoy each other’s company at frequent outings. SCA has fostered many lasting friendships.”

1965 Teri Messina writes, “Thank you SCA for a love of learning that will never stop!”

Veronica Maschio Skerker retired to Vermont after a wonderful career in Educa-

tion. “Thank you St. Catharine Academy for a wonderful high school experience.”

Linda Coscia Shapiro writes, “My husband, Mark, passed away on March 3, 2012 (father of Brenda Shapiro Foglia, class of 1995). I am blessed with two grandsons, Anthony seven years old (son of Brenda) and Ryan, seven months old. I am retired from teaching Pre-K for the Archdiocese of New York. As seen in fall 2018 Pathways, I want to say congratulations to Kismet Crossdale and Duyen Tran – former students of mine – so proud of you both! Also, congrats to my classmate, Brenda Lilienthal Welburn '67 on all your accomplishments! I would like to wish all the best to my past students who graduated from SCA and to all the girls I’ve taught who in the years to come will choose SCA as their second home!”

1968 Jennifer Moran retired in 2016 after twenty years as principal of Academy of the Holy Angels.

1970 Patricia McLaughlin Ernest and her husband, Tom, are enjoying life in the Piedmont of North Carolina walking their trails each day, tending to their vegetable garden and watching a myriad of wildlife feed on the land. They also find great joy in caring for their youngest grandchild while her parents are away on assignment with the Army. Both parents are Majors in the Army and we are very blessed.

1971 Janet Patricia McMahon was a former faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania and a graduate of Yale University. She has one daughter who lives in Kenya and gives her the best vacations.

1972 Linda Christopher Callahan is thankful to be expecting her first two grandbabies this winter and they are due two days apart!

Hanora Sarro writes, “Best wishes in 2019 to my SCA family with fond memories.”

1987 Evdokia Tsolomytis-Kalousis writes, “Love to all my SCA sisters from the Class of 1987.”

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IN MEMORIAM

Salvatrice Russo-Alesi Scotto '57
December 27, 2017

Joseph T. DeAngelis
January 26, 2018
Husband of Bernadette
Treat DeAngelis '61

Sylvia Mottola
March 1, 2018
Mother of Lorraine Mottola '76

Ellen Roche Cavaiuolo '65
March 27, 2018

Mary McLoughlin Brady '62
April 5, 2018

Sister of Catherine McLoughlin
Genkinger '59, Ann McLoughlin '59 and
Margaret McLoughlin O'Mara '57

Kathanna Knapp '72
April 26, 2018

Joseph Cibelli
July 5, 2018
Husband of Ann Iannotti Cibelli '59
and grandfather to Nicolette Cibelli '14

William E. Rottino
July 23, 2018
Husband of Mary Noone Rottino '66

Celestina (Sally) Viggiano
October 12, 2018
Mother of Lucille Viggiano DiRuocco '62

Frances Vasti Falcone '69
October 21, 2018

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**Please remember
St. Catharine Academy
in your will.**

**Our legal title is
St. Catharine Academy**
2250 Williamsbridge Road
Bronx, New York 10469



St. CATHARINE ACADEMY

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Reunion Luncheon Celebration
HONORING CLASSES ENDING IN "4" & "9"
With special recognition to our 50th and 25th celebrants

Sunday, April 7, 2019 | 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

St. Catharine Academy
2250 Williamsbridge Road | Bronx, New York 10469